

# Gov 50: 23. Inference with Mathematical Models

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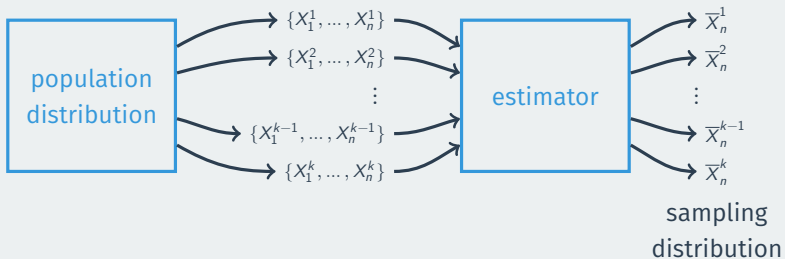
Harvard University

# Roadmap

1. Central limit theorem
2. Normal distribution
3. Using the Normal for inference

# 1/ Central limit theorem

# Sampling distribution, in pictures



# Sampling distribution of the sample proportion

sample mean = population mean + chance error

$$\bar{X} = \mu + \text{chance error}$$

Then  $\bar{X}$  centered at  $\mu$ .

Spread: standard deviation of the sampling distribution is the **standard error**

# Spread of the sample mean

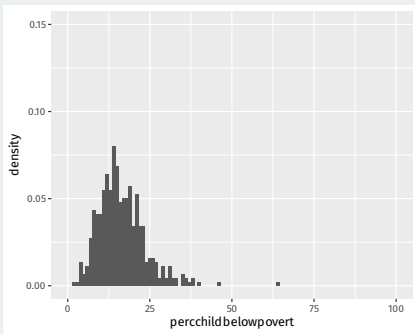
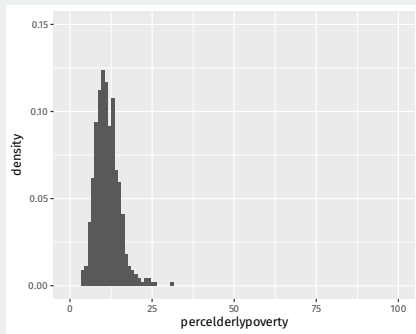
- **Standard error:** how big is the chance error on average?
  - This is the standard deviation of the estimator **across repeated samples**.
  - With random samples, we can get a formula for the SE for many estimators.
- Standard error for the sample mean:

$$SE = \frac{\sigma}{\sqrt{n}} = \frac{\text{population standard deviation}}{\sqrt{\text{sample size}}}$$

- Two components:
  - Population SD: more spread of the variable in the population → more spread of sample means
  - Size of the sample: larger sample → smaller spread of the sample means

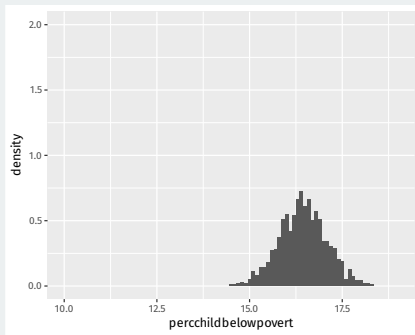
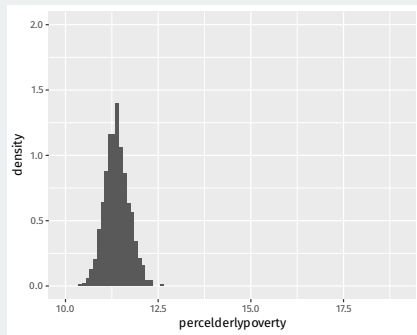
# Midwest counties

Population distributions:



# Midwest counties

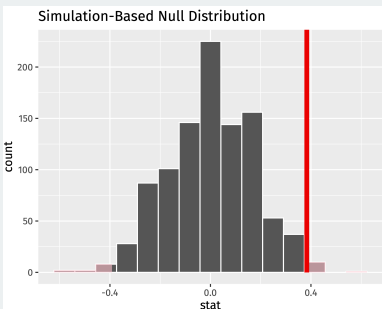
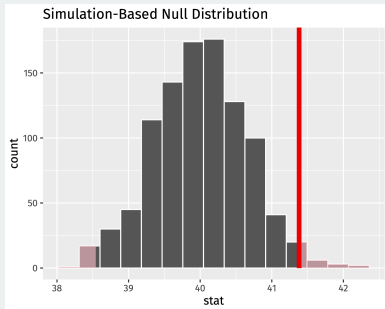
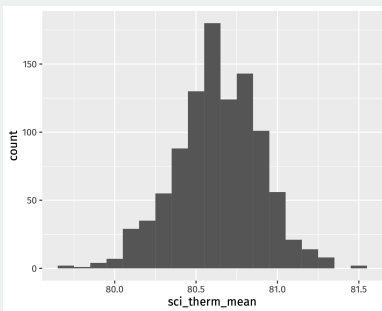
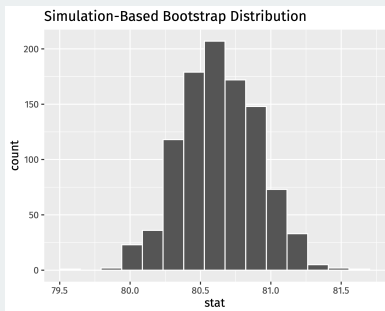
Sampling distributions with  $n = 100$



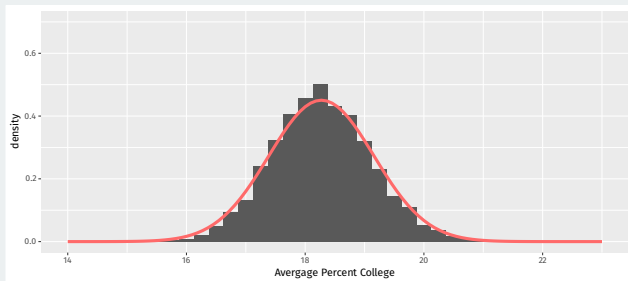
More population spread  $\rightarrow$  higher SE



# Similarity in the bootstrap/null distributions



# Conditions for the CLT

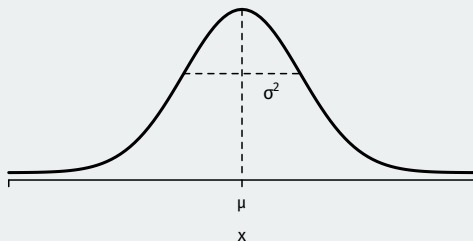


**Central limit theorem:** sums and means of **random samples** tend to be normally distributed as the **sample size grows**.

Many, many estimators will follow the CLT and have a normal distribution and will be easier to use this to do inference rather than doing increasingly complicated simulations.

## **2/** Normal distribution

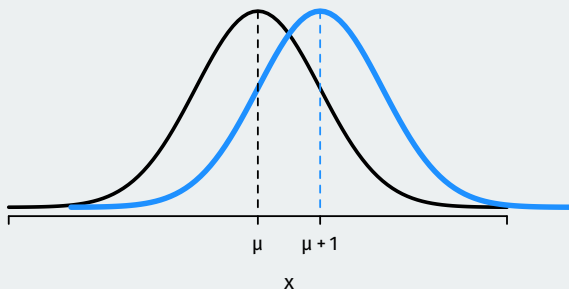
# Normal distribution



- A normal distribution can be affected by two values:
  - **mean/expected value** usually written as  $\mu$
  - **variance** written as  $\sigma^2$  (standard deviation is  $\sigma$ )
  - Written  $X \sim N(\mu, \sigma^2)$ .
- **Standard normal distribution:** mean 0 and standard deviation 1.

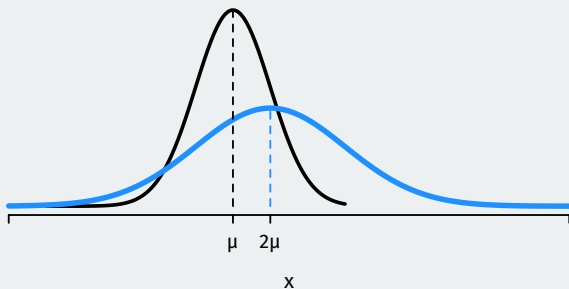
# Reentering and scaling the normal

- How do transformations of a normal work?
- Let  $X \sim N(\mu, \sigma^2)$  and  $c$  be a constant.
- If  $Z = X + c$ , then  $Z \sim N(\mu + c, \sigma^2)$ .
- Intuition: adding a constant to a normal shifts the distribution by that constant.



# Recentering and scaling the normal

- Let  $X \sim N(\mu, \sigma^2)$  and  $c$  be a constant.
- If  $Z = cX$ , then  $Z \sim N(c\mu, (c\sigma)^2)$ .
- Intuition: multiplying a normal by a constant scales the mean and the variance.



# Z-scores of normals

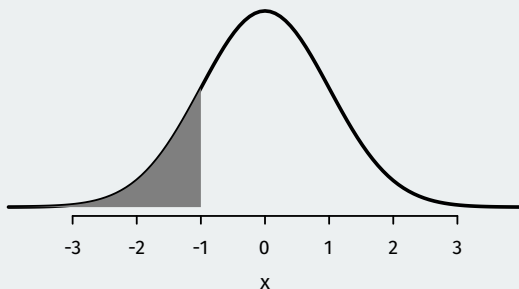
- These facts imply the **z-score** of a normal variable is a standard normal:

$$z = \frac{X - \mu}{\sigma} \sim N(0, 1)$$

- Subtract the mean and divide by the SD  $\rightsquigarrow$  standard normal.
- z-score measures how many SDs away from the mean a value of  $X$  is.

# Normal probability calculations

What's the probability of being below -1 for a standard normal?



This is the area under the normal curve, which `pnorm()` function gives us this:

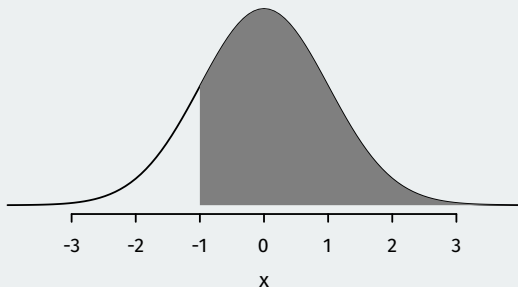
```
pnorm(-1, mean = 0, sd = 1)
```

```
## [1] 0.159
```



# Normal probability calculations

What's the probability of being **above** -1 for a standard normal?



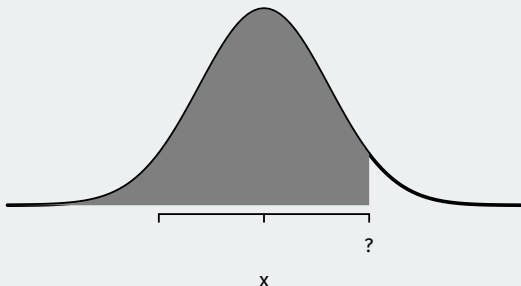
Total area under the curve (1) minus the area below -1:

```
1 - pnorm(-1, mean = 0, sd = 1)
```

```
## [1] 0.841
```

# Normal quantiles

What if we want to know the opposite? What value of the normal distribution puts 95% of the distribution below it?



This is a **quantile** and we can get it using `qnorm()`:

```
qnorm(0.95, mean = 0, sd = 1)
```

```
## [1] 1.64
```

## **3/** Using the Normal for inference

# How popular is Joe Biden?



- What proportion of the public approves of Biden's job as president?
- Latest Gallup poll:
  - Oct 2nd-23rd
  - 1,009 adult Americans
  - Telephone interviews
  - Approve (37%), Disapprove (59%)
- Define r.v.  $Y_i$  for Biden approval:
  - $Y_i = 1 \rightsquigarrow$  respondent  $i$  approves of Biden, 0 otherwise.
  - $p = \mathbb{P}(Y_i = 1)$  the population proportion of Biden approvers.
  - $\bar{Y} = 0.37$  is the sample proportion.

# Standard errors for sample proportions

How variable will our sample proportion be? Depends on the **standard error**.

Special rule for SEs of sample proportion  $\bar{Y}$ :

$$SE \text{ for } \bar{Y} = \sqrt{\frac{p(1-p)}{n}} = \sqrt{\frac{(\text{pop. proportion}) \times (1 - \text{pop. proportion})}{\text{sample size}}}$$

Because we don't know  $p$ , we replace it with our best guess,  $\bar{Y}$ :

$$\widehat{SE} = \sqrt{\frac{\bar{Y}(1-\bar{Y})}{n}}$$

# CLT for confidence intervals

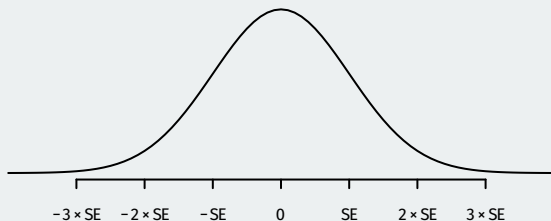
$$\bar{Y} - p = \text{chance error}$$

- How can we figure out a range of plausible chance errors?
  - Find a range of plausible chance errors and add them to  $\bar{Y}$
  - With **bootstrap**, we used resampling to simulate chance error.
- Central limit theorem implies

$$\bar{Y} \approx N\left(p, \frac{p(1-p)}{n}\right)$$

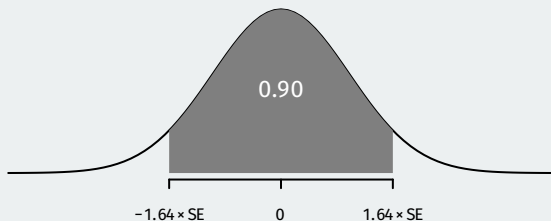
Chance error:  $\bar{Y} - p$  is approximately normal with mean 0 and SE equal to  $\sqrt{p(1-p)/n}$

# Chance errors



If  $\bar{Y} \sim N(p, SE^2)$ , then chance errors are  $\bar{Y} - p \sim N(0, SE^2)$  so:

# Chance errors

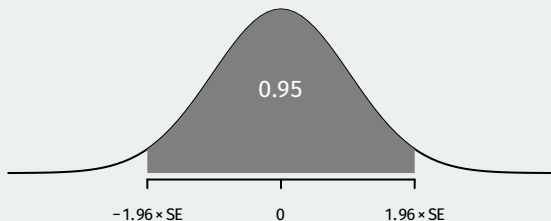


If  $\bar{Y} \sim N(p, SE^2)$ , then chance errors are  $\bar{Y} - p \sim N(0, SE^2)$  so:

- $\approx 90\%$  of chance errors  $\bar{Y} - p$  are within 1.64 SEs of the mean.



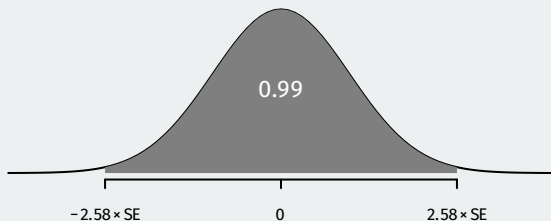
# Chance errors



If  $\bar{Y} \sim N(p, SE^2)$ , then chance errors are  $\bar{Y} - p \sim N(0, SE^2)$  so:

- $\approx 90\%$  of chance errors  $\bar{Y} - p$  are within 1.64 SEs of the mean.
- $\approx 95\%$  of chance errors  $\bar{Y} - p$  are within 1.96 SEs of the mean.

# Chance errors



If  $\bar{Y} \sim N(p, SE^2)$ , then chance errors are  $\bar{Y} - p \sim N(0, SE^2)$  so:

- $\approx 90\%$  of chance errors  $\bar{Y} - p$  are within 1.64 SEs of the mean.
- $\approx 95\%$  of chance errors  $\bar{Y} - p$  are within 1.96 SEs of the mean.
- $\approx 99\%$  of chance errors  $\bar{Y} - p$  are within 2.58 SEs of the mean.

This implies we can build a 95% confidence interval with  $\bar{Y} \pm 1.96 \times SE$

# How did we get those values?

- First, choose a **confidence level**.
  - What percent of chance errors do you want to count as “plausible”?
  - Convention is 95%.
- $100 \times (1 - \alpha)\%$  confidence interval:

$$CI = \bar{Y} \pm z_{\alpha/2} \times SE$$

- In polling,  $\pm z_{\alpha/2} \times SE$  is called the **margin of error**
- $z_{\alpha/2}$  is the  $N(0, 1)$  z-score that would put  $\alpha/2$  in the upper tail:
  - $\mathbb{P}(-z_{\alpha/2} < Z < z_{\alpha/2}) = \alpha$
  - 90% CI  $\rightsquigarrow \alpha = 0.1 \rightsquigarrow z_{\alpha/2} = 1.64$
  - 95% CI  $\rightsquigarrow \alpha = 0.05 \rightsquigarrow z_{\alpha/2} = 1.96$
  - 99% CI  $\rightsquigarrow \alpha = 0.01 \rightsquigarrow z_{\alpha/2} = 2.58$

# Standard normal z-scores in R

`qnorm(x, lower.tail = FALSE)` will find the quantile of  $N(0, 1)$  that puts  $x$  in the upper tail:

```
qnorm(0.05, lower.tail = FALSE)
```

```
## [1] 1.64
```

```
qnorm(0.025, lower.tail = FALSE)
```

```
## [1] 1.96
```

```
qnorm(0.005, lower.tail = FALSE)
```

```
## [1] 2.58
```